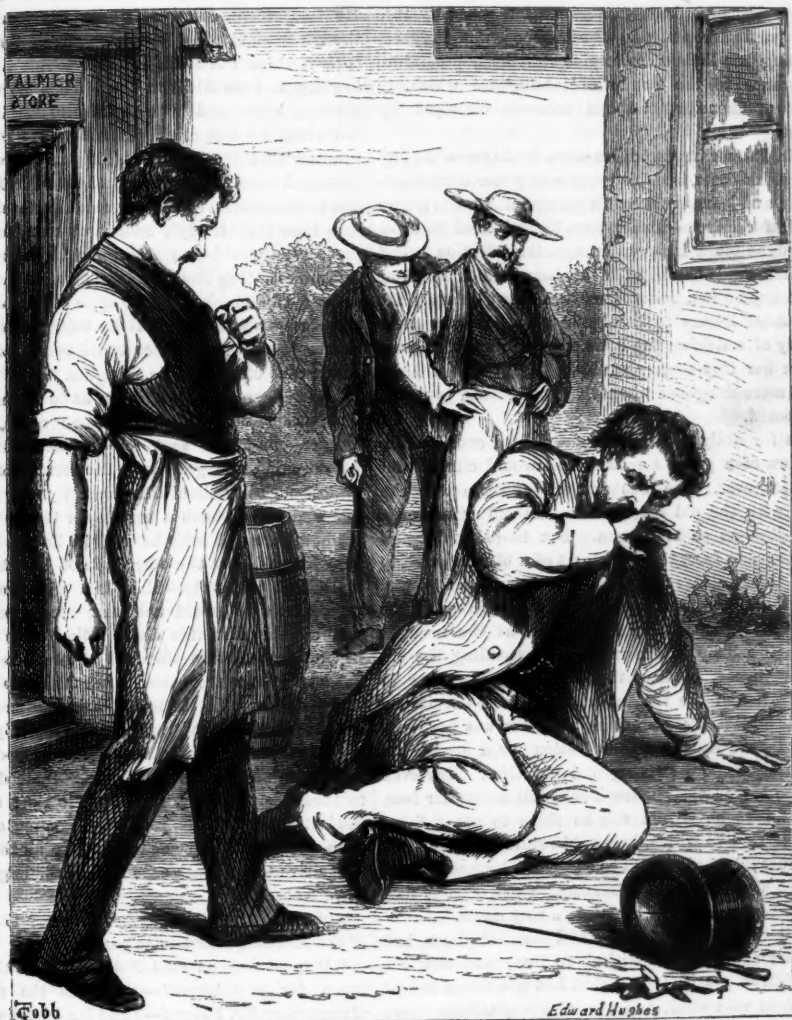


THE BUIVYER

Saturday, August 13, 1870.



"Harry Palmer forgot himself, and struck the slanderer a violent blow."—p. 708.

TWO YEARS.

A TALE OF TO-DAY. BY THE AUTHOR OF "ESTHER WEST," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLIII.—A NEW LIFE.

A NEW life had come to the old house; a new life had begun for all its inmates—at least, for all save one. For months it was only felt as a brooding peace, while the babe lay on its mother's lap, or cradled at her feet, sleeping half the day. But gradually the smiles began to dawn and flicker, and the little limbs to play, and the baby-voice to coo as softly as the wood-dove; and gradually with

these tokens the sadness, and silence, and stillness of the house seemed to break up. There came smiles to all their faces, and baby-talk to their lips, and they began to move about more lightly and briskly.

By the time the snow came, the long robes were laid aside, and Aunt Anne, who fell so easily into the particular attitude of aunt-hood, was daily expecting her little niece to give startlingly premature utterance to the wonderful intelligence which, to her apprehension, she had hitherto conveyed by signs.

Mr. Palmer began to live anew in this new life; to forget his cares, and his great and bitter disappointment, and learn trust and hope again. He was a man fond of children—fonder than he had cared to show—and, as often happens in age, the affection called forth towards the child of his son seemed stronger than any he had felt towards his own children. He had more leisure to indulge it also. He was never weary of watching the little one. He was delighted when her tiny fingers could hold fast one of his—still more delighted when they could reach to clutch his beard.

As for Nelly herself, there remained over her the shadow of a great sorrow, which would cling about her for ever. She was not one of those who can part with the old for the new—an old grief for a new joy—as so many can. But there was a new light on her face, too—the light of a blessing meekly and thankfully received, of a cross humbly and sweetly borne. If the painter of that picture in the dining-room could have seen her, as she brought down her baby in the morning, descending the old oak staircase, holding the babe away from her in admiration of the radiant morning face—for it was the brightest little creature that ever was born—he would have caught an inspiration for a companion picture yet more striking and beautiful. But even as she looked the shadow would fall across her face. Alas! that he should not be there to see. Some day, if God so willed, he would return and find this treasure; but already, even already, he had missed so much. All the loveliness and peace of that first white repose was breaking into a rosy dawn.

Till the baby came Nelly had been rebellious, had neither expected nor wished to live; and now she was full of gratitude that God had not taken her at her own vain word, and out of her gratitude there grew the desire to bless others. She did not need to go abroad for those who needed comforting and helping: they were near enough at home. She now tried to make the home more cheerful, more homelike. She helped Anne, with whom she had ever been on sisterly terms, to rouse her father, and take him out of himself. She was glad that Anne should go out, and encouraged her to go more and more, saying that it brought fresh air into the house, which it certainly did. As for her, she could not

go, and Patricia would not; and the Macnaughtens were always asking them now. Of course, it was Anne's duty to keep up the acquaintanceship.

Late in the autumn Mr. Dalrymple came back, and his visit, or visits—for one or even two did not exhaust him—became another source of animation. He told them every detail of his journey, and, though he had already written much that he had to say, there was fresh interest to his listeners in hearing it from his own lips. Then he would not give up hope—and hope is infectious. Besides, he did them all one mighty service. He took it for granted that the object of his journey was to be discussed openly, and he appealed to Mr. Palmer on one or two points, so that there was no escape. The first time that Harry's name was mentioned in his presence, the old man rose to leave the room; but Nelly was sitting there, and he thought better of it, and stayed and answered in spite of himself. Thus a breach was made which Nelly boldly entered. The silence was broken. They could speak now of him who was so often in their thoughts.

Mr. Palmer even went so far as to express a wish that when Mr. Dalrymple came again, he—Mr. Palmer—might be sent for: a wish which Nelly bore in mind and gratified. He seemed to have the utmost curiosity about this strange young man, who had undertaken such a service for them. He could see how pure and lofty he was, for he was pure and lofty himself; but the other side of his character—his ardent humanity—filled him with wonder and reverence. He would not have recognised it if it had not been so far above other men's—so far beyond the common standard of social tenderness; but having once recognised it, he felt it to be something divine. In its light he saw himself unjust and uncharitable, and that towards his only son.

Christmas drew near again—a season of sorrowful remembrances to the Palmers. Instead of being to them, as to others, the happiest time, it was the saddest season of the year. Its coming seemed to open again the half-healed wounds in all their hearts—to drive them apart once more, to indulge in their private sorrows.

Anne whispered to Nelly her dread of the day and of the inevitable Christmas gathering.

"It must not be," said Nelly. "It would be too much for grandpapa"—that was the name she always gave Mr. Palmer—"and for Patricia, too."

"I fear he will not give it up," said Anne.

"I will try," Nelly answered; and the first time they were alone together, about a week before Christmas Day, she spoke to him on the subject.

He was, as Anne had anticipated, difficult to move. He did not see why any change should be made—why his people should be deprived of a pleasure because he could not enjoy it.

But he was wavering. For himself, he would take the bitterest portion that could be offered to him;

but for them—no. Mr. Palmer was beginning, late as it was, to enter into other people's feelings. He appealed to Nelly herself.

"We must make it up to them in some way, you know," he said. "What shall we do?"

"Send a present to those you have usually invited, and let them eat their dinner at home; and there is something I should like to do very much besides."

"What is that?" he asked.

"I should like to give the children some warm clothing. They are, most of them, miserably clad, and I could get a hundred of them a comfortable woollen frock for the price of one silk dress. I am sure Anne will help me."

"There, that will help you," he said, putting a twenty-pound note into her hand. "It was intended for you. You shall have yours to-morrow."

"You are making it too easy," she replied; "but I shall not refuse, for we must have them made as well. The winter would be over before the poor children got them unless we did, and some would never get them at all."

Nelly was determined that their hands should be full of work; and if hearts are full of trouble, there is no better antidote.

Anne was delighted at Nelly's success, and together they set about the necessary purchases. They added a score or so to the flock of geese and turkeys which Christmas sends flying in all directions; and on the very day after the proposal quite a little bale of linsey-woolsey arrived at the house. Nelly had resolved that the children should wear their new frocks on New Year's Day, and that they should be made at home. Two hundred little frocks in two weeks! How was it to be done?

Nelly speedily answered that question. She turned a large attic into a workroom, invested in a sewing-machine, and hired a young woman to work it. Then the whole household set to work with it—cutting, and shaping, and fixing, and finishing; the very servants volunteered, and spent every available hour in the attic. Even Patricia found it impossible to hold aloof. She pricked her dainty fingers over that brown linsey with the rest, and even began to take an eager interest in the tale of little frocks which took place at the week's end. Alas! only fifty were finished when Christmas came; and it had come almost before they were aware of its coming.

The industry, as a matter of course, stopped for the day. The machine was silenced. The family went to church in the morning, Patricia excepted; she desired to remain at home. In the afternoon each discovered that the fingers of the other were itching after some task, and down came the brown linsey, invading the very drawing-room, where it was worked at more perseveringly than ever. With a sense of relief the work was laid aside that evening. Christmas had passed away.

Early on the morrow Nelly went forth in search of

additional help, which she procured through the medium of the pew-opener, who recommended her to several poor women in the neighbourhood. Nelly engaged five, and it is needless to say that the frocks were ready for distribution on New Year's Eve.

And on that afternoon of the last day of the year, Anne was leaving home to pay a visit to Jane Mac-naughten in her father's new house. Jane would take no denial, but she had been content with a promise from Anne. Quite unexpectedly, however, she and her father came to fetch their guest, and with them came Mr. Dalrymple.

They were engaged in dismissing the workpeople when the visitors arrived. "You see we are very busy," said Anne, as they received them; some of the little brown frocks lying about and seeming to require explanation.

"What have you been about?" asked Jane.

"Making two hundred of these," and she held up one.

"What a dreadful task!"

"It has been a very happy one," said Anne. "They are for the little workers over at the factory."

"You do not ignore the factory, then," said Mr. Dalrymple.

"It is Nelly's idea, not mine," Anne hastened to say.

"Can we see them given away; it will almost repay for the trouble, I should think?" said Jane, whose sentiment was always a little doubtful.

"We have been amply repaid," said Anne, looking her very brightest. "We have had two weeks of delightful hard work, as hard as if we had visited every day, and gone to a dinner and ball every evening; and all for the cost of one, or at the most two modest evening dresses. We would not like to give the children their present before strangers," she added.

"You will get ready at once, then," said Jane.

"Yes; come and help me," and they left the room together, while Nelly devoted herself to the gentlemen. Patricia was not present.

Patricia alone resisted the new influence, not wilfully, indeed, but because no softening influence could reach her in the isolation to which she condemned herself. She took up her cross, but it was in a spirit of proud independence—the spirit which said: "I will bear to the very uttermost, accepting no alleviation, making no complaint. I have not deserved this, for I am true. I have not sowed falsehood, that I should reap such a bitter harvest of deception."

She brooded on her wrongs till they so poisoned her spirit, that all faith and hope and charity died out of her nature. The heavens above her seemed brass and the earth iron. What appeared a bitter hatred of the man she had loved took possession of her soul; forgive him—she would not, and could not

forgive him. Her pride revolted at the tie between them that could not be severed. She was a convict's wife. That was what a perjured man had made of her whom he had vowed to honour.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SAVED.

AND now for another glimpse of Harry Palmer. He and his Yankee friend had parted company after a very few months. Perfectly loyal to Harry himself, the Yankee was "too cute" in his dealings to please his companion. Their principles and mode of doing business were so entirely different that, naturally, disagreements arose. "Principles," Mr. Inston would argue, "what hev they got to do with business? leastways, there's only one principle that's good for business, and that's to make as much money as you can."

"It's not on this side the Atlantic only," Harry would say, "that your notion prevails; but there's more than that wanted. Now I want credit: what's your notion of that?"

"Getting the use of other people's money, to be sure."

"Well, but in giving it they imply trust in your honour and integrity, and I want to establish a character for these."

"Then we can't get along together," was the tolerably candid reply, and Harry and Mr. Inston agreed to part friends.

It is early winter. In one of the frontier towns of the West—which, under the fostering influence of a newly-opened line, spring up with a rapidity quite unknown in the Old World—Harry Palmer has set up a store, and he is in his store on this particular day sorting dried fruits. His shirt-sleeves are rolled up, and he has on a linen apron. Nothing comes amiss to him. He is well-seasoned, he says, "with salt." For this is not his sole or, indeed, his principal occupation. He has a young man to keep the store while he is absent up the country, negotiating with the farmers for the produce of their fields and meadows. He has got what he wanted—credit: few fail to trust his open face and simple speech, and having once tried him they trust him again. He finds a market for their goods, too, when other men fail, for he knows the laws of supply and demand must be consulted, and he takes pains to be well informed as to where, and of what, supply is short and demand eager. He is in a fair way already to be a prosperous merchant—a great agent. He has actually realised his first thousand dollars—that is, he has possession of that sum at the present, and ever since he has had it, he has been debating whether or not he ought to send it home in part payment of his debt to his father. He is strongly inclined to do so; but when he thinks how rapidly it would increase in his hands, he thinks it is better not.

In another year or two, if successful, he will be able to send the whole. At any rate, till he has paid the whole, he will not reveal either where he is or what he is doing.

Meantime those boxes of raisins and currants and candied lemon-peel must be dispatched, that the much-prized plum-pudding may be forthcoming on Christmas Day in many a distant lonely homestead. He goes out just as he is to see them into the wagon at the door.

Opposite the store is the New Hotel. It is not as yet very well frequented, especially by ladies. A lady arrival is something to look at, and such an arrival has just taken place. Her face and dress are being canvassed already. She is certainly beautiful—an English beauty; she is dressed almost in black—black velvet and sable—"to set off her complexion," some one says. The gentleman they take to be her husband has gone into the bar, paying very little heed to her. All this Harry has failed to notice; but Harry's man is full of the information.

The gentleman saunters out of the bar, and stands at the door of the hotel smoking a cigar, his hands in his pockets. Still Harry does not notice him. Next he crosses the street, and stares up at the hotel windows; then he looks at the store, and lastly, with a start and an oath, he recognises its owner.

"Didn't think to stumble on you here," sneered Mr. Jobson, for it was he. "And you're not overjoyed at it. What! you won't so much as recognise on old friend; I see you've got your name up there, so you can't deny yourself to me, though you're not quite the fine gentleman I knew in England."

"I have no wish to deny my identity, Mr. Jobson; and I'm no whit ashamed of my name," retorted Harry.

"What did you cut and run for, then, leaving a pretty wife behind you? She wasn't long in consoling herself, however. You couldn't have left long before I saw her at a railway station with that fellow Dalrymple."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he measured his length on the roadway, coming down with a force that seemed to shake the ground. In his exasperation, Harry Palmer forgot himself, and struck the slanderer a violent blow. Mr. Jobson bellowed for assistance; but in that primitive part of the world such an assault was considered an innocent affair, which it was quite unnecessary to interfere with. If a man only used his fists upon his neighbour, he could use his in turn, that was all. So Mr. Jobson had to pick himself up, and, being a coward as well as a bully, he did not follow Harry into his store, but slunk into his hotel, under the additional mortification of hearing a laugh at his expense.

Harry had retreated into his store by no means in an enviable state of mind. Here was this man come to destroy his peace; he had destroyed it, though

not for a moment did it enter into his mind to doubt his wife. The jealousy which took possession of him was of a purer sort: it took the form of self-reproach; still it was jealousy—the greatest of all mental tortures, and it kept his eyes from sleep for that night at least.

After his encounter with Harry, Mr. Jobson had drunk deeply, and a midnight brawl was the result. Such scenes, unhappily, were not altogether rare between Mr. and Mrs. Jobson. Not that she provoked him, except by her meekness, which was that of a helpless, tortured animal; but that he was for the time being mad—a dangerous lunatic. Some time or other he would kill her, she began to think. Once she had appealed for help against him to strangers, and they had refused to interfere. He was only intoxicated; that was always what they said, as if it excused him for any amount of brutality.

That was what the hotel-keeper's wife told poor Mrs. Jobson in the morning. "He wouldn't have done it if he had not been in drink." And so she must go on with him wherever he chose to drag her. She came down in the morning, her bright eyes a little sunken, her peachy cheeks a little faded, in her black velvets and sables, ready to go on when the train came in. She, too, came to the door of the hotel to peep out on the strange place, and there, looking at her, she saw Harry Palmer. He crossed the street at once, and held out his hand. Out of the hotel at the same time came a man whom he knew and liked, though an adventurer like himself. The three stood together.

Mrs. Jobson, instead of taking his hand, clasped her own together wildly. "You will save me!" she cried.

"It was you, then; I feared so," he said; "but what can I do? I have no power to save you. I cannot take you away from him, and yet you ought not to remain. Where are you going?"

"We are going on, but I do not know whither." She started at the sound of her name. It was her husband calling her, and she hastened to him with a piteous attempt at a smile.

"If I see you speaking to that fellow again, I will kill you!" he hissed, between his teeth. "Go in there."

She obeyed.

"If you travel with that poor creature, do, I implore you, see after her if you can," said Harry to the man who stood by his side, and had heard all that passed between them.

"I won't be able to hold my hands off him if I do; and such a sweet little woman, too," he replied.

"As you know people all up and down the line," resumed Harry, "I wish you would recommend her to anybody who would really help her."

Harry saw no more of the Jobsons. Mrs. Jobson was hurried into the train for another long day's journey. Her lord and master, furnishing himself with an extra supply of brandy and cigars, took his place beside her, and they were whirled away.

The friendly adventurer was in the train with them. He observed, without seeming to do so, Mr. Jobson's every movement. First he got restive, and would move up and down more than was agreeable to his fellow-passengers, though the long carriage was anything but crowded. He kept drinking all the morning; but his irritability was not to be controlled in that way. Next he got insolent, and wanted the train to stop. That was not an unprecedented thing; but the guard refused to comply.

"Come with me!" he shouted in the ear of his terrified wife.

He was evidently getting deranged and dangerous.

The friendly adventurer rose to interfere.

"I will go," she whispered, and she followed to the door of the carriage. He went out on the little platform outside the door. It was a blue-skied, sunny day, though the air was keen and cold. The train was rushing on through a broad, peaceful valley. A flock of birds hung in the sky above.

"Come on!" he shouted once more.

Then there was a ringing cry, and if some one had not held her back, Mrs. Jobson would have flung herself after her husband. He had leapt headlong from the train.

They were going at the highest speed; but the steam was instantly shut off, and they stopped as soon as possible. Half a score of men jumped out and ran along the line to where Mr. Jobson lay. His face was turned upward. He was dead.

(To be continued.)

THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF JACOB.

BY THE REV. DANIEL MOORE, M.A., VICAR OF HOLY TRINITY, PADDINGTON, AND HON. CHAPLAIN TO THE QUEEN.

REGARDED as an intimation that Jacob held a pre-eminent place in the Divine regards, we are at first a little surprised at that scripture, "Jacob have I loved;" for Jacob was very far from being a faultless man. Indeed, in some parts and actions of his life we should say he fell

below the moral level of ordinary men. Yet the Lord loved him—before he had done good or evil—"loved him:" causing his name to be graven on the columns of eternity, as one with that of Messiah himself; as the representative, in all ages, of the holy seed; as the grand patronymic of the whole Israel of God. Greater blessing could no man

desire than this: "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee."

Whether in his life or in his death, the history of Jacob will supply matter for much profitable reflection. We proceed, then, to consider this eminent servant of God under such circumstances and relations as may best assist to a right appreciation of his character.

1. Beginning with his early life at Lahai-roi, spent with his father and mother, we observe that he was evidently a man of *strong domestic affections*.

From the very first he contrasts strangely, in this respect, with his brother Esau. The one a wild, rough, self-willed man of the field, caring for nothing but the excitement and pleasures of the chase; the other having much in him of the calm, meditative spirit of his father Isaac, delighting in the society of his mother, and satisfied with the attractions of home life. Even in that least justifiable part of his conduct—the over-reaching of his brother Esau in the matter of the blessing—this feature of his character may have had something to do with it; for his mother evidently had great influence over him: they had a secret in common which the father and the husband shared not. And thus a blind and loving deference to maternal counsels made him fall in but too readily with a stratagem which his natural conscience could not but regard as a base and unprincipled fraud.

Still more does this susceptibility to the more kindly emotions of our nature show itself after he leaves home. In strong contrast with what is usually found in men of a subtle and scheming nature, the character of Jacob was cast in the very mould of tenderness. All the circumstances of his attachment to Rachel illustrate the better side of his noble sensibility. He is an outcast. He is a slave. His master is a monster of selfishness. Yet, through the midday heat and the chilling nightfall damps, he toils on unweariedly, happy in the recompenses of a reciprocated and virtuous love. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her." Again and again does this strong family affection show itself after his return from Mesopotamia. He revisits Bethel—that place of dear and sanctified associations. But here a link, which united him with a beloved and departed mother, is broken; Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, dies. All honour to her who had sustained such a relation to one so dear! She shall be "buried under an oak;" sacred tears shall water the place; and the tree which covers her remains shall have a name which shall endure to all time. "And the name of the tree was called Allon-bachuth, or the oak of weeping."

Other instances of his affectionateness of disposition will occur. The pillar set over the grave

of Rachel; the tears shed at the supposed loss of Simeon and Reuben; the fond regard shown towards the sons of Joseph; and the touching allusion to the least-loved of his wives in the hour of his dying—"there also I buried Leah"—would all suffice to vindicate the memory of the patriarch from being the hard, close, mere bargain-driving man we might first take him to be, and would compel the admission that, however rightly named Jacob, he was not a mere cunning and adroit supplanter, nor like what men of that sort commonly are. He had a heart—a heart to love and to be loved. There was an affectionateness about him, like that of the disciple whom Jesus loved, enough to have formed an element, however subordinate, in those Divine regards which led the Holy One to say, "Jacob have I loved."

2. We note next, in the personal character of Jacob, that he was a man of *strong faith* and unshaken confidence in the Divine promises.

Here, of course, we shall be met by a reference to his great want of faith, in his impatience to secure the blessing even by unlawful means. The charge is true. "He that believeth should not make haste." The promise of the birthright and all that belonged to it was his already, and with the pledge of Heaven for his security, he ought to have waited God's time patiently, without either miserable bargaining with his brother first, or practising a cruel stratagem on a blind father afterwards. But in reading the sacred histories we cannot fail to be struck with the fact, that even saints who excel in virtue, often fail in that which is pre-eminently their own virtue. Moses, the meekest man, speaking unadvisedly with his lips; Job, the most patient man, cursing the day on which he first saw the light; Abraham, the faithful man, having recourse to a lying subterfuge rather than put his trust in God. Still, with the mixture of unbelief, there were in Jacob all the elements of a strong faith. What made him so intensely anxious for the birthright? Wherefore was it that, through all his years of suffering and sorrow and exile and bondage, he never lost sight of this grand solicitude of his youth? Not, surely, the merely temporal advantages of a right of precedence in the family and a double portion of the paternal inheritance. Other blessings were included in the birthright, which it were to belie the whole tenor of his life and character not to suppose he prized infinitely more; such as the privilege of benediction, commonly allied in patriarchal times with the gift of prophecy; the honour of the priesthood, whereby God's truth was to be preserved among the families of the earth; and, more than all, the dignity of being the progenitor of Him who was to be the Redeemer and Saviour of the world. For such high destiny Jacob had a firm persuasion that God designed him; and yet,

through the obstinate partiality of an erring father, he saw it in danger of passing from him. Shall we censure him too severely if, in the defective religious knowledge of the age, and, it may be, in the very partially developed state of his own religious character, he should use unauthorised means to help on the Divine purposes, or, like one in a later age, put forth his hand to stay the ark of God? The struggles may have been many before he thus yielded to the temptation to take God's work out of his own hand; and who knows how often he may have put up the prayer, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief?"

In the more general promises of God to his fathers, Jacob never lost his confidence. See this at the close of his long and weary servitude in Mesopotamia. He had acquired wealth enough there to have established himself as a great power among the grazier-princes of the country. But he remembered that this was not his promised home; that the God of his fathers had revealed to him that the land on which he lay at Bethel, the whole land of Canaan, should be the possession of himself and of his seed for ever. "Send me away," therefore, was his language to Laban, "that I may go to mine own country." The return thither, were it only on account of Esau, was attended with a danger and loss which we could hardly suppose him to have incurred from a mere longing to revisit the land of his nativity. We must look upon his strong desire to return as having its origin in that deep-seated patriarchal feeling which, through all their migratory changes, made the fathers regard Canaan as their promised home, even while they had no inheritance in it—no, not so much as to set a foot on. There did Jacob believe his posterity should multiply as the stars of heaven; there should be the mighty seed-plot of a nation of priests ordained of God to enlighten and bless the world. There was the chosen type of that better country, even a heavenly, in which the faith of his fathers, Isaac and Abraham, had rested with quenchless and unfaltering hope, while "confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

And, to anticipate our history a little, we may observe that this veneration for Canaan was with Jacob as a "ruling passion, strong in death." He and his had quitted the Land of Promise. All the souls belonging to him had been carried down to, and were now settled in, Egypt. Joseph was a great man there, and prosperity might make the Israelites glad to take root in the soil. Or others might arise who knew not Joseph, and the will of a despot might keep them from returning to their own land. Natural possibilities these, but they move not the strong faith of Jacob. His posterity shall return to their own land. God will make of Israel a great nation. Those children of Joseph,

sons of an Egyptian mother, and apparent heirs to Egyptian wealth, shall not be ashamed to cast in their lot with that of the shepherd nation, the name of the God of Jacob being named upon them, and their future fortunes being gathered up into the purposes of redeeming love. Yes, the dimness and darkness of death were upon the patriarch at that moment. But there was light in the eventide. It was the light of a glorious hope irradiating beforehand the inner chambers of that cave of Machpelah, and in faith of which he fell asleep. "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

3. We note, further, as essential to a right understanding of the character of Jacob, that he was a man of eminent devoutness of spirit, and much given to habits of secret prayer. In illustration of this, view him first at Bethel, on his way to Padan-aram, and flying from the face of his incensed brother Esau. We can hardly point to any evidences of a deeply religious spirit in Jacob before this. He desired the blessing, no doubt—was not without some appreciation of its spiritual worth and significance; but as to his mode of obtaining possession of it, make all the allowances we may, it is difficult to make this consist with a confirmed religious character. Hence there is much to favour the opinion that Jacob experienced a marked spiritual change about this time. Certain it is that from this period he appears more conspicuously as the man of formed habits of devotion—the man of dauntless confidence in the Divine protection—the man of patient and resolved endurance: in everything both able to wait, and willing to wait for God's time, as well as for God's own way. And honoured agencies were at work for promoting this favourable change. First, there was a father's prayers. Very beautiful is it to see the aged Isaac, on that sad morning of their parting, commending his erring son to God. Esau is in the fields, contriving, in moody solitude, his dark scheme of revenge. Rebekah is alone, too, eating the grapes of gall and the clusters of wormwood, which are the only fruits of her successful stratagem; but Isaac is praying—with his son and for him. He is no longer angry either with son or mother. He knows that God will over-rule all for good. And he prays for Jacob: "And God Almighty bless thee . . . and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee."

So prayed the father in the morning. Could it be without an effect on the son's character to hear the same night, from the lips of God himself, an echo in promise of the pious father's words?

But another influence for good was at work with Jacob at this time. It was the beginning of his sorrows—the first chapter of those few and evil days which, as he told Pharaoh afterwards, made

up his sad biography. Thus far he has escaped from Esau, but he cannot escape from himself. For the first time he has come to know the heart of a stranger. In one day he experiences the bitter change from affluence to want; from society to solitude; from the tranquil serenity and joys of home life to the condition of a desert ranger, haunted by conscious guilt, and hearing in every distant footfall the pursuing steps of the avenger. And that blessing, from which he had promised himself so much—plenty, wealth, prosperity, power—how hopelessly does it seem to have gone from him! either changed into a curse or crumbling in his hands, as a few crushed, withered leaves. But "sweet are the uses of adversity;" and a susceptibility to the influence of afflictive dispensations is a marked feature in Jacob's character. From the time of his vision at Bethel, we see nothing but the man of holy and humble heart. When he awoke he was present with God. In his sleep he had seen a vision of angels—a ladder of bright spirits joining this lower world and the world above: and it seemed to assure the poor wanderer that God's holy ones were watching with tender interest over his fallen fortunes; carrying up his tears, and sighs, and prayers to heaven, and bringing tokens of the Divine forgiveness down. Furthermore, there was a voice, and that a mighty voice: it was the voice of the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, renewing to him all the former promises, and even choosing that moment of his deep distress and weakness to add thereto many like words.

The vision was followed by an outburst of fervent gratitude, mingled with feelings of sacred awe. The pillar, the oil, the solemn vow, all told of this. That construction of Jacob's vow is not a charitable one, nor a just, which looks upon it as a mere bargain; the hard, faithless compact of a man who wants to bind God down by pledges—stipulating for protection before he will promise service. It was the overflowing of a grateful heart, anxious only to bind itself. The vow was in effect the echo of the promise: and it meant to say, "Since God has pledged himself to keep me, I pledge myself to serve God." Hence the setting up of the pillar. The consecration of heaven had passed upon the place. Never would he pass by that stone again without remembering that there were vows upon him; that on that spot he had offered himself up to God a living sacrifice—body, soul, and spirit; an offering to Him who had heard him in the night of his distress, and who had promised that to the end of life's journey he should never want a protector or a friend.

It would be easy to touch upon notices of Jacob's personal piety during his twenty years' hard service in Mesopotamia. A life of great

saintliness, indeed, could alone have elicited that testimony from the hard-hearted, grasping Laban, "For I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." But we must pass over the whole of this period to take a glance at the sublime transactions at Mahanaim. Here the piety of Jacob culminates. Every speck or blemish of his former life disappears in the moral lustre of that man of prayer—that wrestler with the powers of the spiritual world—that prince who had power with God and prevailed. The whole scene is one of our childhood's mental pictures. After a day spent in prudent preparations for the dreaded encounter with Esau, the women, the children, the servants, the flocks, are sent over the ford Jabbok, to take their rest for the night. Sleep may visit *them*; for why should the dreamless slumbers of infancy be broken for fears of what should happen on the morrow? Or why should the two wives be deprived of their repose on account of their husband's ancient sin? No; let them sleep on, calmly and without fear, as the flocks by the side of the brook, or the weary camel as he stretches himself on the cool earth. But Jacob will not sleep. He is left alone on the other side of the ford. "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Hardly can rational doubt be raised as to who this MAN was. Who, indeed, could it be, seeing that in relation to Him Jacob himself says, "I have seen God face to face!" Who could it be, seeing that, by Jacob on his death-bed, the benediction of this mysterious visitant is invoked on the sons of Joseph: "The Angel who redeemed me from all evil bless the lads?" But the wrestling—how was it conducted, and how did it terminate? On Jacob's part, with the energy of a champion, with the perseverance of a saint, with the tenderness of a child. "He wept and made supplication," says the Prophet Hosea, "and by his strength he had power with God." Power with God! for the Holy One seemed mysteriously to be overmastered in this conflict with his servant Jacob. We ask, what made the prayer so acceptable? Is God wont to be dictated to so peremptorily by his creatures, as to what he shall give and what he shall withhold? No. And it was just because of this absence of anything like dictation, that the prayer of Jacob was successful. He stipulates for nothing; not for his gift to Esau, that it may be acceptable; nor for his two bands, that they may be preserved; not even for his own life, that it be not sacrificed to a brother's revenge. He asks only for some secret, silent, assured token that, in this the great emergency of his life, the Almighty will still stand his friend. The nature of the deliverance to be vouchsafed—how it should come, or what it should be—this he



(Drawn by M. E. EDWARDS.)

'Somebody we know nothing about, of course,' said Miss Tyrawley, slightlyly.—p. 717.

submits absolutely to the orderings of infinite wisdom. One thing only will he desire of the Lord—and though, in the night, and through the night, and till the day breaketh, he have to wrestle for it, that one thing he will have: “I will not let thee go except thou BLESS me.” Whenever saw the world such an example of saintly strength and heroism? With what wondering awe must those shining hosts have looked on that had met Jacob in the way! And now the God that heareth prayer will show how he honoureth prayer. No more will he behold iniquity in Jacob. Even that odious name Jacob—that old birth-stigma—that cleaving, life-long reproach which an angry brother had always cast in his teeth, shall be taken away. “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. The seed of Jacob shall henceforth be the name of the praying seed. Jacob have I loved.”

4. But we are to deal with Jacob IN DEATH as well as IN LIFE: and here justice could not be done to the subject without considering him in his prophetic character—as an inspired prophet of the Lord. The closing scene is drawing near. The twelve sons assemble round the dying father's bed. “Gather yourselves together, ye sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel your father, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.”

To us, as Christians, the interest centres chiefly in the prophecies which relate to the tribe of Judah. Judah was to be mighty in battle; prosperous in enterprise; looked up to as a wonder and a praise among his brethren; and, though sorely beset by his enemies, able to maintain the existence of his tribe till the times of Messiah should draw near. Of him should come kings and legislators, many in number, till the dynasty should close in the person of him who was King of kings, and Lord of lords. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” With those modern criticisms which would displace this precious passage from the number of our Messianic prophecies, we may not concern ourselves. The history of such speculations is commonly the setting up of one difficulty, in order to the putting down of another; till we are at too glad to find ourselves back in the old paths—the good way in which scholars the ripest and believers the humblest have walked and found rest for their souls. We can be in no doubt on what the faith of the dying patriarch was resting at this time. He saw, as Abraham saw, “the day of Christ afar off:” saw, in the coming of this

Shiloh, the topstone brought forth which should put the crown on all the Divine dispensations. Much, indeed, would he rejoice in Judah's other prerogatives—in his royal dominion, in his splendid victories, in his richly productive tribeship; but all such distinctions were as nothing compared with this, that, from his family was to spring “the desire of all nations.” His prophetic spirit seems to have beheld Christ already lifted up—the exalted centre of all human hopes—directing all eyes to his cross; drawing all hearts to his throne; bowing all nations at his footstool: “unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

Lastly, we cannot contemplate Jacob in his death without seeing what a tranquil and assured hope he enjoyed of a *glorious immortality*. Once, in the midst of his dying prophecies, the wearied and wasted frame seemed on the point of giving way. There was danger that some of his sons would lose their part in his last words, and especially that the Church of all time would be deprived of the profit of that sublime benediction pronounced on the head of him that was separate from his brethren. If it were so—if the string of his tongue were so soon to be bound by the hand of death—then shall his last utterances testify of the sufficiency of his supports in a dying hour:—the peace he enjoys, the promises he believes in, the face which he beholds, the blessed consummation he is waiting for, so soon as he shall have gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost:—“I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”

So passes Jacob from this visible scene. We cannot fail to see that he is not to be placed on the roll of common men. Without the moral loftiness of Abraham, without the placid dignity of his father Isaac, he may well challenge comparison with either of them for the valuable lessons taught us by his history, or for the influence of his character on his own and succeeding times; for in him piety is honoured; humble instrumentalities are acknowledged; the Divine faithfulness is illustrated, and a new development unfolds itself in the scheme of redeeming grace. And if the inhabitants of the heavenly world are admiring spectators of his conflicts, so saints shall be warned and taught by his success. Enthusiasm shall be rebuked if it leave everything to prayer; and unbelief shall be rebuked if it surcease from prayer till the blessing has been wrung from God. Thus have heaven and earth, angels and men, a part in Jacob's imperishable fame. The name of the wicked shall rot; for who thinks now of Laban the miser, or Esau the profane? But the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. “Jacob have I loved.”

WET BLANKETS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."



HERE is nothing that so chills a candid, warm-hearted, enthusiastic person through and through as what is metaphorically called a wet blanket. The water-cure doctors may say what they will of the virtues of wet sheets;—I dare say the wet blankets have their advocates too, who tell the miserably chilled victims, "It is all for your good!" but I don't believe in it myself. Give me good well-aired sheets, well-aired blankets, in a well-aired room, in a well-aired house, or no Christmas visiting for me, thank you kindly all the same.

These metaphorical wet blankets are the people who spoil many a child's holiday by prophesying that it will hail, snow, or rain, or the fly will break down, or the boat overset, or a cold will be caught, or that something shocking or disagreeable will happen. These are they who, if Mr. Brown is going to make a new start in business, hope he may not repent it, wonder where the money is to come from, and what tradesmen will serve him on credit. These be they who, if Miss Peake is going to marry Mr. Swain, wonder if she knows his age, and hope she may not find his six noisy children too much for her. These are they who hope the new Ministry will be equal to affairs of state in our very ticklish condition. These be they who suppose you know the Church is in danger, or if it is not, it will be found so when too late.

When Harry Bishop came up to London to walk the hospitals, he at first felt as completely lost as a needle in a bottle of hay. Accustomed to a small but very sympathetic circle at home, where, if there were no wealth, there certainly was no pride or pretension, he sadly missed the amenities of family life; but, aware that his mother and sisters would grieve if they knew it, he set his face like a flint against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;" doubtless repeated Gray's "Ode to Adversity" and Henry Kirke White's "Invocation to Disappointment" at least once a day; and, at all events, buckled to the drudgery of his career in the right, manly spirit, like a sensible good young man as he was.

Very happy did he think himself when some chance introduction enabled him to form the acquaintance of Miss Bland and her niece, Miss Tyrawley.

Miss Bland was an elderly lady of limited income, who lived with her niece a short distance from town, though recent building improvements have united the suburb to the metropolis, so that where there were then trees, fields, and hedges,

there now are consecutive rows of slightly-run-up houses, varied by an occasional brick-field. In Harry's hospital-walking days the suburb was pretty enough; and being close to the Thames, he would sometimes pull up the river on a fine summer evening to botanise, and end by drinking tea at Miss Bland's. For the intimacy had ripened quickly from graciousness to cordiality—the young man was always invited to everything in the shape of a party, sometimes taken by Miss Bland to other people's houses, always welcomed by her on Sundays, and on every occasion received with flattering distinction; she deferring to his remarks, soliciting his opinions, laughing at his jokes, and, in a general way, petting and pleasing him, as experienced and sociable ladies very well know how to do.

As for Miss Tyrawley (who was thought to be about six-and-twenty), her manner to him was really all softness and sweetness, so that intimate friends began to rally her about him; on which she would look surprised and amused, and exclaim, "What! such a boy? Oh, that would be too absurd. There's nothing in it, I assure you. Cannot one be a little friendly to a poor lad thrown on the world, without being talked of? It's too bad, and I shall be quite angry."

But people were so perverse that they would not believe her, especially as she liked him to carry her Prayer-book, and turn over the leaves of her songs, and relieve her of her empty teacup, and a dozen little things of the kind. And Miss Bland would show he was quite *l'ami du maison* by saying, "Mr. Bishop, will you ring the bell? I know I can ask you to stir the fire. Mrs. Jones, Mr. Bishop will see you down-stairs," and sometimes she would call him Harry, which he assured her he liked, it put him so in mind of home.

Yet so little did Harry understand all these flattering attentions, that when he went home in the autumn, and told his mother and sisters what a pleasant old lady Miss Bland was, and how agreeable and delightful was Miss Tyrawley, and his sister Maria said, "I hope, Harry, you are not going to forget Helen Byrne," he scouted the idea, and said, "No fear of that, I assure you! Why, Miss Tyrawley is as old at least as you are, and considers me a boy. I have heard her call me so. Besides, there's no comparison. Helen is a dear little angel, and does not mind waiting, and has not a bit of fear of me. She is as good as gold, and as clever as she is good. I don't think Miss Tyrawley has had a very superior education—nothing to

compare with Helen; and she isn't a quarter as pretty: rather too pert and affected. But what has that to do with it? She is very kind to me, and so is Miss Bland, and they make my life, away from you, a great deal pleasanter; and I really think they have such a regard for me, that if there were anything they could do for me, they would do it."

"Take care then, Harry," said his mother, "that you do not ill requite their kindnesses by raising any unfounded expectations."

"My dear mother, what expectations could I raise?" said he. "I know very well what you are thinking of, but you would not do so for a moment if you could see Miss Bland or Miss Tyrawley. They treat me just as you would treat a schoolboy in the holidays—or a grandson, or a nephew. As for anything in the way of flirtation, there is nothing of the kind; Miss Tyrawley would laugh immoderately at the thought. She is too much my senior; we are exceedingly good friends, nothing more."

"Well, since it is so, I am very glad you have such a nice house to visit at," said Mrs. Bishop, "and much obliged to Miss Bland for being so kind to you. Mind you tell her so."

"They often ask me about you," said Harry, "and I am sure they would like you extremely. Miss Tyrawley delights to hear me talk of Maria and Emily."

"Do you ever talk to her of Helen Byrne?" inquired Emily, slyly.

"No," said he, grave in a moment; "that subject is too tender and sacred."

Helen Byrne was the eldest daughter of the excellent schoolmaster by whom Harry had been educated: An affection had grown up between the young people, with the entire approval of their parents; but as it was certain that they must wait some time before Harry would be able to afford even a humble home, they were patiently waiting till he could see his way before him. During Harry's holiday frequent meetings with Helen, family tea-drinkings, sociable pic-nics, and long tête-à-tête rambles through green lanes and meadows, over high, breezy downs and wild commons, made the present so delightful that it is not surprising he thought very little of the past; or if, in answer to Helen's solicitous inquiries how he cheated the tedium of long evenings in solitary London lodgings, he took in at a glance the events of the last ten or twelve months, and would say—

"Oh, it has not been so bad. You know I told you I read and wrote a good deal, and sometimes went to the Park, and now and then dined out; and then Miss Bland and Miss Tyrawley sometimes took me to a little party, and I often dined with them on Sundays, and went to church with

them afterwards; and then I used to row up the river sometimes, quite early in the morning, before the day's work began; and on the whole I got along very fairly. There was also the pleasure of writing home, and to you."

This satisfied the single-minded girl—and well it might, for Harry was candour itself, and she had known him from his earliest school-days. Nor was he hampered by the consciousness of any entanglement; he had taken Miss Bland's friendly attentions for what they professed to be; and the thought of Miss Tyrawley, with her somewhat too high colour and peculiar figure, and her rattling, prattling talk, in comparison with the tender Helen, so thoughtful and so gentle, could only be to bring the town mouse into very disadvantageous juxtaposition with the country mouse.

I can't recollect whether Harry had to pursue his subsequent studies at Edinburgh or Paris first, but I am clear that he went first to one and then the other. He was now a fine, well-grown young man, who had passed his examinations and got through his studies with credit, and quite ready and eager to step into a business, if a share in an eligible one should be attainable.

Just about this time, his Aunt Sophia, who had always been very kind to him, sent for him, and said, "Harry, I want to have a little talk with you. I am getting old, my dear, and it is right I should think a little about my affairs. It is much pleasanter to do good, and be able to enjoy the sight of it, than to keep hoarding all one has, and only will it away when one can't keep it any longer. I live, as you know, on my annuity, without touching what is in the funds. I mean that to be divided between yourself and sisters; but the girls can very well wait till they marry, or till I die, for their share. I wish to afford you a good start by buying you a share of a good business, when you are ready for one."

"Aunt, you are very kind," said Harry, turning very red—"too kind, a great deal—"

"Put all that aside. I have thought the matter over, and mean what I say. Your mother knows and approves it."

"Certainly," said Harry, in a glow, "such a kindness will be the making of me. I am quite able to enter into practice now, and I know of an opening at Plaistow that would exactly suit me."

"Plaistow!—that's a long way off," said his Aunt Sophia, thoughtfully; "but I had some very kind friends there when I was a girl, and some of the family are still there, and would be sure to be kind to you. And what may be the sum you would have to pay down?"

"I'm not exactly sure; but I could easily inquire—"

"Do so, my dear; make every necessary in-

quity, and do nothing rashly. It is an important step——"

"Aunt, how good you are!"

"My dear, you are very good. You have been a good son and a good brother; and you were a good boy at Dr. Byrne's. He was speaking of you the other day; and I assure you Helen's face glowed when he was praising you. She will make a good wife, that girl, Harry, whoever has her; and I hope that one will be you."

"It is my dearest hope," faltered Harry.

"So your mother has told me," said Mrs. Sophia; "and it made me so glad to hear how she spoke of it. And Dr. Byrne is going to retire from his school: he has made something considerable by it. I don't know how much, but enough to let him live in comfort for the remainder of his life; and I'm sure he deserves to do so."

With such smiling prospects, it may well be supposed that Harry's next journey to London was with a very light heart. After thinking over a variety of matters on the road, "How glad," thought he, "Miss Bland and Miss Tyrawley will be to hear of all this! I will go down to them, if I can, to-morrow."

We generally find time to do what we wish to do. Harry did so in this instance; and as wind and tide were in his favour, he took a wherry and pulled up to the little mall. Lightly leaping from the boat, he passed under the tall old trees shading the row of somewhat antique houses, that reminded one of the days of Walpole and Hogarth. Turning into Miss Bland's little front-garden, bright with flowers, he caught a glimpse of Miss Bland, in her cap with blue satin ribbons, looking over the blind; and, the next minute, was shown into her room, when she, not knowing she had been seen, came forward with an air of surprise and with friendly, outstretched hand, crying, "Who would have thought of seeing you?"

Soon they launched into a sea of chat, and she told him he was looking well—quite a credit to country air and country diet; she hoped he had had a pleasant time. He said, "Oh yes; delightful!"—he was sure she would be glad to hear how well things were going with him. "Indeed?" cried Miss Bland, with interest and curiosity; and artless Harry was emboldened to tell her of his aunt's kind and generous conduct, and his prospect of stepping into a good business, and one thing and another, till she learnt from him that his new home would be shared by another person, and that, in short, he was engaged to be married.

Directly this dawned on Miss Bland, her eyelids gave an involuntary little twinkle, and her lips became contracted, still smiling, but in a set, mechanical smile. Harry hardly noticed it, being full of his subject, and sure, as he thought, poor

fellow, of her sympathy; and she kept saying, "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "Indeed!" at stated intervals, drawing out all there was to draw, till at last there ensued a dead pause. Harry felt it rather awkward, for he was expecting warm expressions which remained unspoken, and, clearing his throat, was going to begin again, when the door opened, and in came Miss Tyrawley, prettily dressed. On seeing him, she made a mute gesture of surprise, and put herself in a pose. Harry rose hastily to meet her, when Miss Bland, in rather a high-pitched voice, and without any preface or circumlocution, cried—

"Letitia, Mr. Bishop brings us a surprise—he's going to be married!"

Miss Tyrawley stood still a moment, uttering a prolonged "Oh—! how odd!"

"Odd" was not a word that fitted the occasion, to Harry's mind—and heart. He held out his hand rather embarrassed, and said, "You congratulate me, I hope?"

"Oh yes, of course," said Miss Tyrawley. "Wish you joy."

"Letitia, you have not asked him who it is," pursued her aunt.

"Somebody we know nothing about, of course," said Miss Tyrawley, slightly; "some lady down in the country—or else in town."

"You show your usual acumen," said Harry, laughing. "A lady in the country."

"Ah, I concluded so," said Letitia, whose hand, when taken by his, was perfectly limp.

"You're not surprised, then?" said Harry, rather chilled.

"Surprised! oh, how can one be so? These things happen every day," said Miss Tyrawley. "Since you were here last, Sabina Graves has accepted old Mr. Thrush. Money, of course."

"That can't be said in my case," replied Harry. "We shall have to struggle a little at first."

"Ah, imprudent marriages are so dangerous," said Miss Bland, plaintively.

"Oh, mine won't be imprudent. It will be quite with consent of friends—steady, experienced friends, who think I have only to be industrious."

"Why, then I don't see there's any struggle," said Miss Tyrawley, carelessly.

"Oh! to those who know what it is to keep house," interposed her aunt, "it is a very serious thing—even in my circumstances. Young people have no idea of the burdens of a genteel establishment, nor how money runs away. Young people think, so much for rent, so much for food, so much for dress, and never reckon house tax, and property tax, and district rate, and poor rate, and water rate, and lighting and paving——"

"Miss Bland, you make my blood run cold," said Harry, laughing. "May not all these be set down at a stated sum as taxes?"

"Certainly, if you choose to do so," returned Miss Bland; "though some of them are on a sliding scale. And then there are repairs continually wanted in an old house, and very often in a new one."

"Ah, well, we shall probably escape all these difficulties at first, by living in furnished lodgings."

"Lodgings!" repeated Miss Tyrawley, with as much well-bred astonishment as if he had said "in a coal-hole."

"Oh, well, every one knows his own plans," said Miss Bland; "but if ever I grudged money about anything, it would be spending it on other people's furniture at an enormous premium. Besides, it strikes me, if a man cannot afford to buy furniture at the outset, before he has felt the dead weight of a family, when *will* he be able to afford it?"

"When I have made my way a little, there is every prospect of my affording it," said Harry; "in fact, there is a little sum— But I want to see how Plaistow suits me first."

"Plaistow!" almost screamed Miss Tyrawley; "are you really going to that horrid place?"

"My dear, don't call it horrid," said Miss Bland; "some very respectable people live there, and you have never seen it."

"But it's all among the flats, aunt—below water-mark, I think."

"Ah, well, then, Mr. Bishop will find plenty of patients," said Miss Bland, with a slight laugh; "I hope he will keep his own health there."

"I'm sure I hope so," said Harry; "in fact, I'm never ill."

"Don't boast," interrupted Miss Bland; "it always makes me nervous."

"Oh, but independent of salubrity," said Miss Tyrawley, "I wonder at the selection of a neighbourhood—the wrong end of London! no society!"

"Oh yes, there are some nice friendly people there, I'm told," said Harry; "but I own I have regretted that we shall be so far from you."

Miss Tyrawley gave an insipid smile.

"My dear," said her aunt, "I dare say there's good society. There is good society everywhere, if one does but know where to find it."

"And how to get admitted into it," added Miss Tyrawley; "yes, I suppose there are carriage-people everywhere—even in the Fens."

"And when is it to be?" resumed Miss Bland, after a dead pause.

Harry was chilled, and said absently, "Oh, not just yet—that is, in the course of the spring, I suppose."

"Do you call that far off?" said Miss Bland; "if you had to choose a house and buy furniture, you would find but little time."

"In fact, I don't quite know," said Harry; "it depends on contingencies."

"Ah, then you may have a good deal of worry yet," said Miss Bland. "Well, I hope all may end well."

"Oh yes, so do I," said Miss Tyrawley, without the least show of interest.

"Letitia, is it not almost time for you to dress?" said Miss Bland. "Mr. Bishop will excuse you, I know. Letitia is going out this evening."

"It's time for me to be going, too, I'm sure," said Harry, rising.

"Won't you stay to have tea with me?"

"No, thank you." He had fully meant to do so; but the invitation was evidently so little intended to be accepted, that he thought it best to go. Nothing could be more mannered than the remainder of the interview. Harry ended it as soon as he could, and made off for the river-side, thankful to be out of the house, and inwardly muttering, "Catch me coming here again!"

What could be the meaning of it all? he asked himself again and again, as he pulled hard against tide? What had changed them so? How could he possibly have offended them? if, indeed, they really were offended. The honest fellow could not answer these questions, and indeed they were very hard to be answered. But he felt just as if Miss Bland and Miss Tyrawley had poured a jug of cold water down the nape of his neck, which had completely quenched him; or as if, relying on their hospitality, he had sought a night's lodging, and been put into a state bed between wet blankets.

By the time he had rowed himself back, he was in a complete glow, and thought no more of his grievances. He went to his lodging, and there found a warm-hearted letter from Helen awaiting him, and another from his mother, and another from the gentleman at Plaistow with whom he was about to enter into partnership. These letters made Harry so happy that, *though in lodgings*, and by no means handsome ones, he was ready to repeat—

"My mind to me a kingdom is!
Such perfect joy therein I find."

The future brightened to him again. Plaistow became as attractive as hilly Highgate or Hampstead; and one thing he ceased to regret—that he should not be within visiting distance of Miss Bland and Miss Tyrawley.

"For I see very plainly," mused he, "that they would not like Helen; neither would Helen like them. After all I have said and written to her about them, I should be quite ashamed for her to see them behave to me as they did this afternoon. Ah well, they were very kind to me formerly—just when I most needed their kindness—and I will not forget it now."

Nor did he forget it. But the old friendship died off, as it need not and should not have done,

each party taking their separate course. And when Harry rose in his profession and settled in London, and lived in a good house, and had very excellent society, Miss Trawley, who was getting somewhat *passé*, regretted that the intimacy had ceased, and when they occasionally met, said very

polite and flattering things about the pleasure of renewing old acquaintance; but somehow nothing came of it. Thus many a pleasant connection, that might have ripened into warm and helpful friendship, expires untimely through the chill application of a wet blanket.

SONNET.

THOSE days of settled autumn, warm and rare,
Are sanctuaries of memory and prayer;
For when by morning roads the rustling
leaves
Gleam in the sunlight, cheery and simple-clear,
Lo! soon the village church bells' swinging sound
Floats undulating over the dry sheaves,
Just as of old we heard its solemn sound,
When life was new, and when our friends were near.

All day the soft sun dials peace around
From blue hill, tree, and shrub; the heart all
day
Beats low with pleasing sadness, and at times
Pulsates to early pleasures past away,
Then melts in prayer, when come again those
chimes
Across the quiet evening, starred and grey.
T. C. IRWIN.

LITTLE ALEC'S GREAT FAILING.

COME along with me, Fred, and I will show you what I am going to make."
"You mean what else you are going to begin. I never saw such a fellow as you are; always doing, always making, but nothing ever done or made. I won't come to see any more of your beginnings. You can let me know when you have something finished, and I will come and look at it with all my heart."

"But, Fred," remonstrated Alec, "I want you to give me some advice about this. Do come, or it really never will be finished. I shall take so much more interest in it if you help me out of a few difficulties at first."

"Well, then, Alec, come on, once more, and let us look at what is to be done."

The boys walked on hastily towards Alec's home, and were quickly together in a small room, evidently used as a sort of carpenter's shop, which had been fitted up by an indulgent father to encourage industry in his son.

"Now look, Fred, at this fine ship. It will be a beauty when finished! I have cut out all the sails, and mamma has promised to make them for me. How can I fix the rudder so that it will act? and can you tell me how to make the rope ladders?"

"I will lend you my own ship," replied his friend. "It is thoroughly fitted up, and by examining it carefully you will soon see how to do yours."

"Oh, thank you, Fred! I am so glad! When can I have it?"

"Come home with me now, and you can bring it back with you."

"That I will; stop a minute till I just say where I am going. Now, then, I am ready."

So off the two friends started together. The one

full of glee to get so fine a model for his work, the other wondering in his own mind whether the ship in question would ever come to anything.

We must now pass over a few weeks, and once more the same two boys were out together.

"Do come and spend the afternoon with me, I am building a pigeon-house; you could help me so well. Papa has promised to buy me a pair of very handsome pigeons, when the house is ready."

"Then your papa will never have to spend his money."

"Why, what do you mean, Fred?"

"Why, I mean the pigeon-house will never be finished; therefore no birds will be wanted to put in it."

"Now you are hard on a fellow, just because I did not go on with that stupid ship. Why, what would have been the use of it if I had finished it? What's the good of yours? Ah, I've got you there, Fred!"

"No, indeed, Alec; I would not part with my ship. I often think of the happy hours I spent in making every part of it, and now feel quite proud to look upon it as the result of my own labours."

"Ah, well, but you see I happen to be of a more practical nature; I like to make useful things."

"Stop—stop, there, that's enough! or I will give you a list of both useful and ornamental articles, all begun by you, and see if you can give me a good reason for not finishing one of them. I often wonder if you ever finish a dinner, or washing yourself; you never finish learning your lessons, that's clear, because you never know them."

"There, that's enough for one lecture," good-naturedly replied Alec. "I know it is a failing of mine, but somehow I get so sick and tired of things, when I have spent any time over them; but I mean

to finish this house very quickly before the fit comes on, so do come and help me."

Fred at last yielded to his friend's entreaties, and the two boys worked hard for two hours. Alec was delighted to see the progress they had made, and Fred began to think he should see its completion before he went home, when all at once the door burst open and in rushed Tom Hardy.

"Come along, you two mopers! Why, the pond is frozen over! Get your skates! We can have capital fun for a few hours."

Alec looked at Fred, and with some hesitancy in his voice and manner said, "What's to be done?"

"What you like," said Fred; "I know what I should do."

"What would you do?"

"Why, carry out my own plans; you had determined to complete this house to-day."

"Yes; but it may thaw to-morrow, and you know I can always work here, and cannot always find ice; so let the house go this once. Come and join us; we shall have glorious fun!" and off he ran for his skates, not waiting for a reply.

Alec Freeman was the only son of kind, indulgent parents. His father often thought very gravely over his boy's great failing—want of stability in his undertakings, and finding remonstrance useless, he resolved upon another plan to show him his fault and its effects. So one evening when they were left alone, he asked his son if he was fond of hearing stories. He preferred it to reading one, and at once prepared himself to listen to his father.

"About twenty years ago I knew a bright, clever boy; his parents were not very well off, so that at an early age he left school and was received into a merchant's office as junior clerk. His father had some misgivings about his future, but hoped to see a change for the better when he was once embarked upon the business of life. Strange to say, his great failing was somewhat like yours, but I do hope yours will never bring you into so much misery as his did him, and one reason I have for telling you his history is, that you may see how small failings lead to, and grow into, great ones if allowed to go on unchecked."

"Well, then, to return to my story. This boy was known at school by the nickname of 'The Great Projector,' for he was always making plans and projects for himself and schoolfellows, but never carried out one of them himself. He seemed too lazy and idle to carry out anything he had begun. At home the house was full of half-carved toys, half-finished drawings, half-read books, &c., and his father naturally feared that his accounts would share the same fate. And so they did. He was only three months in his situation when his master called upon his father, telling him he could keep him no longer, as he had neglected his duties, and had been the

cause of great inconvenience to his fellow-clerks, who had always to wait for his work, and often to finish it for him. With some difficulty his father next got him into a stockbroker's office, and hoped that the loss of his first situation would prove a good lesson to him for the future. But he had only been a week in his new situation before he neglected very important duties, causing his employers a great deal of trouble. He was dismissed, and, fearing to tell his father what had happened, he ran away to sea, where he suffered great hardships, and never rose above the grade of a common sailor. He was continually being punished for his old fault, till, after changing from one ship to another, and finding no improvement in his condition, he resolved once more to appeal to his father for help; and thus, after tossing about for five years, he stood at his father's door in rags. But it was too late; his best friend was dead, and his poor mother totally unable to assist him, being left very scantily provided for, owing to the sudden death of her husband. Finding he now had no one to look to for aid, he gave way, led a vagabond life, got into bad company, and from thence into trouble. The last I heard of him was that he had been transported for being concerned in a robbery."

Alec listened most attentively to this tale, and, happily, it led him to seriously consider his fault, and so he began in good earnest to finish many of his beginnings. There is good reason to hope that he succeeded in curing himself of this sad fault before it was too late.

M. N.

"THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

303. In which book of the Old Testament are we told that God gave instructions for the concealment of certain things?

304. We are told in one verse not to do a thing, and in the next to do it.

305. Mention a quotation in the New Testament, where the exact place in the Old Testament from which it is taken is given.

306. What was created and destroyed in one night?

307. How often does St. Paul quote heathen writers?

308. What fact connected with our Lord's death is recorded only in one Gospel?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 688.

296. Solomon, whose name signifies *Peaceable* (1 Chron. xxii. 9, margin).

297. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the King of Israel between the joints of the harness" (2 Chron. xviii. 33). "By chance there came down a certain priest that way: and passed by on the other side" (Luke x. 31).

298. Body, Heb. x. 5; soul, John xii. 27; spirit, John xiii. 21.